

pious mother, was present at the dreadful martyrdom of her sons, but, like the above-mentioned mother of the Maccabees, she continued to encourage them until the last one expired. After this, she was brought back to prison, where she suffered four months longer, when at last she was beheaded, and thus rejoined her seven sons in heaven.

### **Saints Ruffina and Secunda**

Ruffina and Secunda were sisters and Roman virgins. Their parents had betrothed them to Armentarius and Verinus, but they refused to marry, saying that they had consecrated their lives to Jesus Christ. They were, therefore, apprehended during the reign of the Emperors Valerian and Gallienus. When Junius, the prefect, saw he could not shake their resolution either by promises or by threats, he first ordered Ruffina to be beaten with rods. While she was being scourged, Secunda thus addressed the judge: "Why do you treat my sister thus honorably, but me dishonorably? Order us both to be scourged, since we both 'confess Christ to be God.' "

Enraged by these words, the judge ordered both to be cast into a dark and foetid dungeon; immediately a bright light and a most sweet odor filled the prison. They were then shut up in a bath, the floor of which was made redhot; but from this also they emerged unhurt. Next they were thrown into the Tiber river, with stones tied to their necks, but an Angel saved them from the water and then finally beheaded ten miles out of the city on the Aurelian Way. Their bodies were buried by a matron named Plautilla, on her estate, and were afterwards translated into Rome, where they now repose in the Basilica of Constantine near the baptistery.

\* (excerpted from: <http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com>)

## ***The Seven Holy Brothers, Martyrs*** *and*

## ***Saints Ruffina and Secunda***

**Feast Day: July 10**



## The Seven Holy Brothers, Martyrs

And

Saints Rufina and Secunda

### The Seven Holy Brothers

\*The names of the seven brothers whose martyrdom is commemorated on July 10 are: Januarius, Felix, Philip, Sylvan, Alexander, Vitalis, and Martialis. Their mother was Saint Felicitas, a matron greatly renowned in Rome...for her edifying life. After her husband's death, she laid aside all worldly magnificence and vowed to live a life of perfect chastity for the remainder of her life. The education of her sons was her greatest care, and as at that period, the Christians were most cruelly persecuted, she directed all her exhortations and instructions in such a manner, that she might impress deeply into their hearts constancy to the true Faith, contempt of temporal happiness, and even of life itself, and, at the same time, a high estimation of eternal happiness and a great desire to obtain it. She frequently spoke to them of the torments of the Christian martyrs in and out of Rome, and the great glories which had been prepared for them in heaven; of the happiness of suffering or dying for Christ's sake... she awakened in the hearts of her sons a fervent desire to suffer and die for the faith of Christ...

God accepted her prayer. The idolatrous priests had observed that many were converted to the Christian faith by the edifying example of St Felicitas and her sons. They were sent to the Emperor, Marcus Aurelius...where Felicitas be compelled to offer a public sacrifice to the gods... The Emperor ordered Publius, the Prefect of the city of Rome, to attend to the requests of the priests...Because of her noble birth, Publius endeavored to persuade Felictas to comply with the request by flatteries and promises...finding them to no avail, he tried to frighten her...when that did not work Publius gave her that night to reconsider her decision. The pious mother told her sons what had happened and spent the night with them in prayer, as she was convinced that they would suffer martyrdom.

On the following day, Publius repaired to the Place of Mars, and taking his seat as Judge, had Felicitas and her seven sons brought

before him. All appeared cheerful, encouraging each other to bear bravely the approaching tortures. Publius, addressing the mother, said : "I presume that you have already changed your mind; but if not, look upon your children and take pity on them. In your power lies all their future happiness." After this he turned to the children and said: "Come, my dear children, I will procure you the happiest lot upon earth, if you are obedient to the emperor; but I am compelled to treat you most cruelly, should you oppose his commands." Felicitas exclaimed that the happiness promised by Publius would result in eternal ruin for her children. Then turning towards her children, she encouraged them to constancy, like the heroic mother of the Maccabees...do not regard the torments...here below, but consider the joys which God promises you in heaven...Publius, furious that Felicitas dared in his presence to incite the children to disobey the imperial command, ordered her to be buffeted most barbarously. Then calling the children to him, one after another, he endeavored to win them over with alternate promises and menaces. When Januarius, the eldest son answered that his mother had spoken to her children wisely, Publius again became enraged and ordered him scourged and cast into a dungeon. The same was done to the second, third, fourth, and fifth sons. Publius left nothing untried to induce at least the two youngest, Vitalis and Martialis, to forsake Christ, but found they were as brave as their brothers. Publius, astonished at such unprecedented heroism, reported the whole proceedings to the emperor, who gave orders that they should all be executed.

Beyond description was the joy of the seven Christian heroes when their death was announced to them. They hastened to the place of execution with greater eagerness than others, and lost, during their martyrdom, neither their courage nor their joy. Each encouraged the other, until all had gone to heaven. Januarius was scourged with loaded whips until he expired; Felix and Philip were beaten to death with clubs; Sylvanus was thrown down a precipice; Alexander, Vitalis and Martialis were slain by the sword. Felicitas, the